IN THE TULES.

BY BRET HARTE.

He had never seen a steamboat in his life. Born and reared in one of the Western Territories, far from a navigable river, he had known only the "dug out" or canoe as a means of conveyance across the scant streams whose fordable waters made even those scarcely a necessity. The long narrow, hooded wagon, drawn by swaying oxen, known familiarly as a "prairie schooner," in which he journeyed across the plains to California in '53, did not help his conception by that nautical figure. And when at last he dropped upon the land of promise through one of the Southern mountain passes, he halted all unconsciously upon the low banks of a great yellow river amid a tangled brake of strange, reed-like grasses that were unknown to him. The river broadening as it debouched through many channels into a lordly bay seemed to him the ultima thule of his journeyings. Unyoking his oxen on the edge of the luxuriant meadows which blended with scarcely any line of demarkation into the great stream itself, he found the prospect "good" according to his lights and prairial experiences, and converting his halted wagon into a temporary cabin, he resolved to rest here and "settle." There was little difficulty in so doing. The cultivated clearings he had passed were few and far between; the land would be his by discovery and occupation; his habits of loneliness and self-reliance made him independent of neighbors. He took his first meal in his new solitude under a spreading willow, but so near his natural boundary that the waters gurgled and oozed in the reeds but a few feet from him. The sun sank, deepening the gold of the river until it might have been the stream of Pactolus itself. But Martin Morse had no imagination; he was not even a gold seeker; he had simply obeyed the roving instincts of the frontier man in coming hither. The land was virgin and unoccupied; it was his: he was alone. These questions settled, he smoked his pipe with less concern over his 3,000 miles' transference of habitation than the man of cities who had moved into a next street. When the sun sank he rolled himself in his blankets in the wagon bed and went to sleep.

But he was presently awakened by something which at first he could not determine to be a noise or an intangible sensation. It was a deep throbbing through the silence of the night; a pulsation that seemed even to be communicated to the rude bed whereon he lay. As it came nearer it separated itself into a labored monotonous panting, continuous but distinct from an equally monotonous but fainter beating of the waters, as if the whole track of the river were being coursed and trodden by a multitude of swiftly tramping feet. A strange feeling took possession of him, half of fear, half of curious expectation. It was coming nearer. He rose, leaped hurriedly from the wagon and ran to the bank. The night was dark. At first he saw nothing before him but the steel black sky pierced with far-spaced, irregularly scattered stars. Then there seemed to be approaching him from the left another and more symmetrical constellation; a few red and blue stars high above the river, with three compact lines of larger planetary lights flashing toward him, and apparently on his own level. It was almost upon him; he involuntarily drew back as the strange phenomenon swept abreast of where he stood, and resolved itself into a dark yet airy bulk, whose vagueness, topped by enormous towers, was yet illuminated by those open squares of light that he had taken for stars, but which he saw now were brilliantly lit windows. Their vivid rays shot through the reeds and sent broad bands across the meadow, the stationary wagon and the slumbering oxen. But all this was nothing to the inner life they disclosed through lifted curtains and open blinds—which was the crowning revelation of this strange and wonderful spectacle. Elegantly dressed men and women moved through brilliantly lit and elaborately gilt saloons. In one a banquet seemed to be spread, served by white-jacketed servants; in another were men playing cards around marble-topped tables; in another the light flashed back again from the mirrors and glistening glasses and decanters of a gorgeous refreshment saloon; in smaller openings there was the shy disclosure of dainty white curtains and velvet lounges of more intimate apartments. Martin Morse stood enthralled and mystified. It was as if some invisible Asmodeus had revealed to this simple frontier man a world of which he had never dreamed. It was the world—a world of which he knew nothing in his simple rustic habits and profound Western isolation—sweeping by him with the rush of an unknown planet. In another moment it was gone; a shower of sparks shot up from one of the towers and fell all around him and then vanished even as he remembered the set piece of Fourth of July fireworks had vanished in his own rural town when he was a boy. The darkness fell with it, too. But such was his utter absorption and utter breathless preoccupation that only a cold chill recalled him to himself, and he found he was standing mid-leg deep in the surge cast over the low banks by the passage of the first steamboat he had ever seen!

He waited for it the next night, when it appeared a little later from the opposite direction, on its return trip. He watched it the next night and the next. Hereafter he never missed it—coming or going—whatever the hard and weary preoccupations of his new and lonely life. He felt he could not have slept without seeing it go by. Oddly enough his interest and desire did not go further; even had he the time and money to spend in a passage on the boat and thus actively realize the great world of which he had only these rare glimpses, a certain proud, rustic shyness kept him from it. It was not his world, he could not face the snubs that his ignorance and inexperience would have provoked, and he was dimly conscious, as so many of us are in our ignorance, that in mingling with it he would simply lose the easy privileges of alien criticism. For there was much that he did not understand, and some things that grated upon his lonely independence.

One night, a lighter one than those previous, he lingered a little longer in the moonlight to watch the phosphorescent wake of the retreating boat. Suddenly it struck him that there was a certain irregular splashing in the water quite different from the regular, diagonally crossing surges that the boat swept upon the bank. Looking at it more intently he saw a black object turning in the water like a porpoise, and then the unmistakable uplifting of a black arm in an unskilful swimmer's overhand stroke. It was a struggling man. But it was quickly evident that the current was too strong and the turbulence of the shallow water too great for his efforts. Without a moment's hesitation, clad as he was in only his shirt and trousers, Morse strode into the reeds the next moment, and with a call of warning, was swimming toward the now wildly struggling figure. But from some unknown reason as Morse approached him nearer the man uttered some incoherent protest and desperately turned away, throwing off Morse's extended arm. Attributing this only to the vague convulsions of a drowning man, Morse, a skilled swimmer, managed to clutch his shoulder and propelled him at arm's length, still struggling, apparently with as much reluctance as incapacity, toward the bank. As their feet touched the reeds and slimy bottom the man's resistance ceased and he lapsed quite listlessly in Morse's arms. Half lifting, half dragging his burden, he succeeded at last in gaining the strip of meadow and deposited the unconscious man beneath the willow tree. Then he ran to his wagon for whiskey.

But to his surprise on his return the man was already sitting up and wringing the water from his clothes. He then saw for the first time, by the clear moonlight, that the stranger was elegantly dressed and of striking appearance, and was clearly a part of that bright and fascinating world Morse had been contemplating in his solitude. He eagerly took the proffered tin cup and drank the whiskey. Then he rose to his feet, staggered a few steps forward, and glanced curiously around him, at the motionless wagon, the few felled trees and evidence of "clearing," and the rude cabin of logs and canvas just beginning to rise from the ground a few paces distant, and said impatiently:

"Where the devil am I?"

Morse hesitated. He was unable to name the locality of his dwelling. He answered briefly:

"On the right bank of the Sacramento."

The stranger turned upon him a look of suspicion not unmingled with resentment. "Oh!" he said with ironical gravity, "and I suppose that the water you picked me out of was the Sacramento River. Thank you!"

Morse with slow Western patience explained that he had only settled there three weeks ago, and the place had no name.

"What's your nearest town, then?"

"Thar ain't any. Thar's a blacksmith's shop and a grocery at the cross roads twenty miles on, but it's got no name as I've heard on."

The stranger's look of suspicion passed. "Well," he said in an imperative fashion, which, however, seemed as much the result of habit as the occasion, "I want a horse and pretty d——d quick, too."

"Hain't got any."

"No horse? How did you get to this d——d place?"

Morse pointed to his slumbering oxen.

The stranger again stared curiously at him. After a pause he said with a half-pitying, half-humorous smile:

"Pike—aren't you?"

Whether Morse did or did not know that this current California slang for a denizen of the bucolic West implied a certain contempt, he replied simply:

"I'm from Pike county, Missouri."

"Well," said the stranger, resuming his impatient manner, "you must beg or steal a horse from your neighbors."

"Thar ain't any neighbor nearer than fifteen miles."

"Then send fifteen miles, d—n it! Stop." He opened his still clinging shirt and drew out a belt pouch, which he threw to Morse. "There! there's $250 in that. Now I want a horse. Sabe?"

"Thar ain't any one to send," said Morse quietly.

"Do you mean to say you are all alone here?"

"Yes."

"And you fished me out—all by yourself?"

"Yes."

The stranger again examined him curiously. Then he suddenly stretched out his hand and grasped his companion's.

"All right! If you can't send, I reckon I can manage to walk over there to-morrow."

"I was goin' on to say," said Morse simply, "that if you'll lie by to-night I'll start over at sun up after puttin' out the cattle, and fetch you back a horse afore noon."

"That's enough." He, however, remained looking curiously at Morse. "Did you never hear," he said with a singular smile, "that it was about the meanest kind of luck that could happen to you to save a drowning man?"

"No," said Morse simply. "I reckon it orter be the meanest if you didn't."

"That depends upon the man you save," said the stranger with the same ambiguous smile, "and whether the saving him is only putting things off. Look here," he added, with an abrupt return to his imperative style, "can't you give me some dry clothes?"

Morse brought him a pair of overalls and a "hickory shirt," well worn, but smelling strongly of a recent wash with coarse soap. The stranger put them on while his companion busied himself in collecting a pile of sticks and dry leaves.

"What's that for?" said the stranger suddenly.

"A fire to dry your clothes."

The stranger calmly kicked the pile aside.

"Not any fire to-night if I know it," he said brusquely. Before Morse could resent his quickly changing moods he continued in another tone, dropping to an easy reclining position beneath the tree. "Now tell me all about yourself, and what you're doing here."

Thus commanded, Morse patiently repeated his story from the time he had left his backwoods cabin to his selection of the river bank for a "location." He pointed out the rich quality of this alluvial bottom and its adaptability for the raising of stock, which he hoped soon to acquire. The stranger smiled grimly, raised himself to a sitting position, and, taking a penknife from his damp clothes, began to clean his nails in the bright moonlight—an occupation which made the simple Morse wander vaguely in his narration.

"And you don't know that this d——d hole will give you chills and fever till you'll shake yourself out of your boots?"

Morse had lived before in aguish districts and had no fear.

"And you never heard that some night the whole river will rise up and walk over you and your cabin and your stock?"

"No; for I reckon to move my shanty further back."

The man shut up his penknife with a click and rose. "If you've got to get up at sunrise, we'd better be turning in. I suppose you can give me a pair of blankets?"

Morse pointed to the wagon. "Thar's a shake-down in the wagon bed; you kin lie there." Nevertheless, he hesitated, and with the inconsequence and abruptness of a shy man continued the previous conversation.

"I shouldn't like to move far away, for them steamboats is pow'ful kempany o' nights. I—never seed one afore I kem here," and with the inconsistency of a reserved man, and without a word of further preliminary, he launched forth into a confidential disclosure of his late experiences. The stranger listened with a singular interest and a quietly searching eye.

"Then you were watching the boat very closely just now, when you saw me. What else did you see? Anything before that—before you saw me in the water?"

"No—the boat had got well off before I saw you at all."

"Ah," said the stranger. "Well, I'm going to turn in." He walked to the wagon, mounted it, and by the time that Morse had reached it with his wet clothes, he was already wrapped in the blankets. A moment later he seemed to be in a profound slumber.

It was only then, when his guest was lying helplessly at his mercy, that he began to realize his strange experiences. The domination of this man had been so complete that Morse, although by nature independent and self-reliant, had not permitted himself to question his right, or to resent his rudeness. He had accepted his guest's careless or premeditated silence regarding the particulars of his accident as a matter of course, and had never dreamed of questioning him. That it was a natural accident of that great world so apart from his own experiences he did not doubt, and thought no more about it. The advent of the man himself was greater to him than the causes which brought him there. He was as yet quite unconscious of the complete fascination this mysterious stranger held over him, but he found himself shyly pleased with even the slight interest he had displayed in his affairs, and his hand felt yet warm and tingling from his sudden soft but expressive grasp, as if it had been a woman's. There is a simple intuition of friendship in some lonely, self-abstracted natures that is nearly akin to love at first sight. Even the audacities and insolence of this stranger affected Morse, as he might have been touched and captivated by the coquetries or imperiousness of some bucolic virgin. And this reserved and shy frontier man found himself that night sleepless, and hovering with an abashed timidity and consciousness around the wagon that sheltered his guest, as if he had been a very Corydon watching the moonlit couch of some slumbering Amaryllis.

He was off by daylight—after having placed a rude breakfast by the side of the still sleeping guest—and before midday he had returned with a horse. When he handed the stranger his pouch, less the amount he had paid for the horse, the man said curtly:

"What's that for?"

"Your change. I paid $50 for the horse."

The stranger regarded him with a peculiar smile. Then replacing the pouch in his belt, he shook Morse's hand again and mounted the horse.

"So your name's Martin Morse. Well—good-by, Morsey."

Morse hesitated. A blush rose to his dark cheek.

"You didn't tell me your name," he said. "In case——"

"In case I'm wanted? Well, you can call me Capt. Jack." He smiled, and, nodding his head, put spurs to his mustang and cantered away.

Morse did not do much work that day, falling into abstracted moods and living over his experiences of the previous night, until he fancied he could almost see his strange guest again. The narrow strip of meadow was haunted by him. There was the tree under which he had first placed him, and that was where he had seen him sitting up in his dripping but well-fitting clothes. In the rough garments he had worn and returned lingered a new scent of some delicate soap overpowering the strong alkali flavor of his own. He was early by the river side, having a vague hope, he knew not why, that he should again see him and recognize him among the passengers. He was wading out among the reeds in the faint light of the rising moon, recalling the exact spot where he had first seen the stranger, when he was suddenly startled by the rolling over in the water of some black object that had caught against the bank, but had been dislodged by his movements. To his horror it bore a faint resemblance to his first vision of the preceding night. But a second glance at the helplessly floating hair and bloated outline showed him that it was a dead man, and of a type and build far different from his former companion. There was a bruise upon his matted forehead and an enormous wound in his throat already washed bloodless, white, and waxen. An inexplicable fear came upon him, not at the sight of the corpse, for he had been in Indian massacres and had rescued bodies mutilated beyond recognition—but from some moral dread that strangely enough quickened and deepened with the far-off pant of the advancing steamboat. Scarcely knowing why, he dragged the body hurriedly ashore, concealing it in the reeds, as if he was disposing of the evidence of his own crime. Then, to his preposterous terror, he noticed that the panting of the steamboat and the beat of its paddles were "slowing" as the vague bulk came in sight, until a huge wave from the suddenly arrested wheels sent a surge like an enormous heartbeat pulsating through the sedge that half submerged him. The flashing of three or four lanterns on deck and the motionless line of lights abreast of him dazzled his eyes, but he knew that the low fringe of willows hid his house and wagon completely from view. A vague murmur of voices from the deck was suddenly overridden by a sharp order, and to his relief the slowly revolving wheels again sent a pulsation through the water, and the great fabric moved slowly away. A sense of relief came over him, he knew not why, and he was conscious that for the first time he had not cared to look at the boat.

When the moon rose he again examined the body, and took from its clothing a few articles of identification and some papers of formality and precision which he vaguely conjectured to be some law papers from their semblance to the phrasing of sheriffs' and electors' notices which he had seen in the papers. He then buried the corpse in a shallow trench which he dug by the light of the moon. He had no question of responsibility. His pioneer training had not included coroners' inquests in its experience. In giving the body a speedy and secure burial from predatory animals he did what one frontier man would do for another; what he hoped might be done for him. If his previous unaccountable feelings returned occasionally, it was not from that, but rather from some uneasiness in regard to his late guest's possible feelings and a regret that he had not been there at the finding of the body. That would in some way have explained his own accident, he did not doubt.

The boat did not "slow up" the next night, but passed as usual, yet three or four days elapsed before he could look forward to its coming with his old extravagant and half-exalted curiosity, which was his nearest approach to imagination. He was then able to examine it more closely for the appearance of the stranger, whom he now began to call "his friend" in his verbal communions with himself, but whom he did not seem destined again to discover, until one day, to his astonishment, a couple of fine horses were brought to his clearing by a stock drover. They had been "ordered" to be left there. In vain Morse expostulated and questioned. "Your name's Morse, ain't it?" said the drover with business brusqueness, "and I reckon there ain't no other man o' that name around here?" "No," said Morse. "Well, then, they're your's." "But who sent them?" insisted Morse. "What was his name and where does he live?" "I don't know es I was called upon to give the pedigree o' buyers," said the drover, dryly, "but the horses is 'Morgan,' you kin bet your life." he grinned as he rode away.

That Capt. Jack sent them, and that it was a natural prelude to his again visiting him, Morse did not doubt, and for a few days he lived in that dream. But Capt. Jack did not come. The animals were of great service to him in "rounding up" the stock he now easily took in for pasturage and saved him the necessity of having a partner or a hired man. The idea that this superior gentleman in fine clothes might ever appear to him in the former capacity had even flitted through his brain, but he had rejected it with a sigh. But the idea that with luck and industry he himself might in course of time approximate to Capt. Jack's evident station did occur to him, and was an incentive to energy. Yet it was quite distinct from the ordinary workingman's ambition of wealth and state. It was only that it might make him more worthy of his friend. The great world was still as it had appeared to him in a passing boat—a thing to wonder at—to be above—and to criticise.

For all that he prospered in his occupation. But one day he awoke with listless limbs and feet that scarcely carried him through his daily labors. At night his listlessness changed to active pain and a feverishness that seemed to impel him toward the fateful river, as if his one aim in life was to drink up its waters and bathe in its yellow stream. But whenever he seemed to attempt it, strange dreams assailed him of dead bodies arising with swollen and distorted lips to touch his own as he strove to drink, or of his mysterious guest battling with him in its current, and driving him ashore. Again when he essayed to bathe his parched and crackling limbs in its flood he would be confronted with the dazzling lights of the motionless steamboat and the glare of stony eyes—until he fled in aimless terror. How long this lasted he knew not until one morning he awoke in his new cabin with a strange man sitting by his bed, and a negress in the doorway.

"You've had a sharp attack of 'tub fever,'" said the stranger, dropping Morse's listless wrist, and answering his questioning eyes, "but you're all right now, and will pull through."

"Who are you?" stammered Morse feebly.

"Dr. Deukesne of Sacramento."

"How did you come here?"

"I was ordered to come to you and bring a nurse, as you were alone. There she is." He pointed to the smiling negress.

"Who ordered you?"

The doctor smiled with professional tolerance. "One of your friends, of course."

"But what was his name?"

"Really, I don't remember. But don't distress yourself. He has settled everything right royally. You have only to get strong now. My duty is ended, and I can safely leave you with the nurse. Only when you are strong again, I say—and he says—keep back further from the river."

And that was all he knew. For even the nurse who attended him through the first days of his brief convalescence would tell him nothing more. He quickly got rid of her and resumed his work, for a new and strange phase of his simple, childish affection for his benefactor, partly superinduced by his illness, was affecting him. He was beginning to feel the pain of an unequal friendship; he was dimly conscious that his mysterious guest was only coldly returning his hospitality and benefits, while holding aloof from any association with him, and, indicating the immeasurable distance that had withheld any kind message or sympathetic greeting, he had kept back even his name. The shy, proud, ignorant heart of the frontiersman swelled beneath this fancied slight, which left him helpless alike of reproach or resentment. He could not return the horses, although in a fit of childish indignation he had resolved not to use them; he could not reimburse him for the doctor's bill, although he had sent away the nurse. He took a foolish satisfaction in not moving back from the river, with a faint hope that his ignoring of Capt. Jack's advice might mysteriously be conveyed to him. He even thought of selling out his location and abandoning it that he might escape the cold surveillance of his heartless friend. All this was undoubtedly childish—but there is an irrepressible simplicity of youth in all deep feeling, and the worldly inexperience of the frontiersman left him as innocent as a child. In this phase of his unrequited affection he even went so far as to seek some news of Capt. Jack of Sacramento, and following out his foolish quest even to take the steamboat from thence to Stockton.

What happened to him then was perhaps the common experience of such natures. Once upon the boat the illusion of the great world it contained for him utterly vanished. He found it noisy, formal, insincere, and had he ever understood or used the word in his limited vocabulary, vulgar. Rather, perhaps, it seemed to him that the prevailing sentiment and action of those who frequented it, and for whom it was built, were of a lower grade than his own. And strangely enough this gave him none of his former sense of critical superiority, but only of his utter and complete isolation. He wandered in his rough, frontiersman's clothes from deck to cabin, from airy galleries to long saloons, alone, unchallenged, unrecognized, as if he were again haunting it only in spirit, as he had so often done in his dreams. His presence on the fringe of some voluble crowd caused no interruption; to him this speech was almost foreign in its allusions to things he did not understand, or worse, seemed inconsistent with their eagerness and excitement. How different from all this was recollection of the slowly oncoming teams uplifted above the level horizon of the plains in his old wanderings; the few sauntering figures that met him as man to man and exchanged the chronicle of the road, the record of Indian tracks, the finding of a spring, the discovery of pasturage, with the lazy, restful hospitality of the night. And how fierce here this continual struggle for dominance and existence even in this lull of passage. For above all and through all he was conscious of the feverish haste of speed and exertion. The boat trembled, vibrated, and shook with every stroke of the ponderous piston. The laughter of the crowd, the exchange of gossip and news, the banquet at the long table, the newspapers and books in the reading room, even the luxurious couches in the staterooms were all dominated, thrilled, and pulsating with the perpetual throb of the demon of hurry and unrest. And when, at last, a horrible fascination dragged him into the engine room and he saw the cruel, relentless machinery at work, he seemed to recognize and understand some intelligent but pitiless Moloch who was dragging this feverish world at its heels.

Later he was seated in a corner of the hurricane deck, whence he could view the monotonous banks of the river, yet perhaps by certain signs unobservable to others he knew he was approaching his own locality. He knew that his cabin and clearing would be undiscernable behind the fringe of willows on the bank, but he already distinguished the points where a few cottonwoods struggled into a promontory of lighter foliage beyond them. Here voices fell upon his ear, and he was suddenly aware that two men had lazily crossed over from the other side of the boat and were standing before him looking upon the bank.

"It was about here, I reckon," said one listlessly, as if continuing a previous lagging conversation, "that it must have happened. For it was after we were making for the bend we've just passed that the deputy, goin' to the stateroom just below us, found the door locked and the window open. But both men—Jack Despard and Seth Hall, the Sheriff—weren't to be found. Not a trace of 'em. The boat was searched, but all for nothing. The idea is that the Sheriff, arter gettin' his prisoner comf'ble in the stateroom, took off Jack's handcuffs and locked the door; that Jack, who was mighty desp'rate, bolted through the window into the river, and the Sheriff, who wasn't a slouch, arter him. Others allow—for the chairs and things was all tossed about in the stateroom—that the two men clinched thar and Jack choked Hall and chucked him out an then slipped clar into the water himself. For the stateroom window was just ahead of the paddle box, and the Cap'n allows that no man or men would fall afore the paddles and live. Anyhow, that was all they ever knew of it."

"And there wasn't no trace of them found?" said the second man, after a long pause.

"No. Cap'n says them paddles would hev just catched 'em and slung 'em round and round and buried 'em way down in the ooze of the river bed with all the silt of the current atop of 'em, and they mightn't come up for ages, or else the wheels might have waltzed 'em way up to Sacramento until thar wasn't enough left of 'em to float, and dropped 'em when the boat stopped."

"It was a mighty fool risk for a man like Despard to take," resumed the second speaker as he turned away with a slight yawn.

"Bet your life, but he was desp'rate and the Sheriff had got him safe. And they do say that he was superstitious like all them gamblers and allowed that a man who was fixed to die by a rope or a pistol wasn't to be washed out o' life by water."

The two figures drifted lazily away, but Morse sat rigid and motionless. Yet strange to say only one idea came to him clearly out of this awful revelation—the thought that his friend was still true to him—and that his strange absence and mysterious silence was fully accounted for and explained. And with it came the more thrilling fancy that this man was alive now to him alone. He was the sole custodian of his secret. The morality of the question, while it profoundly disturbed him, was rather in reference to its effect upon the chances of Capt. Jack and the power it gave his enemies, than his own conscience. He would rather that his friend should have proven the proscribed outlaw, who retained an unselfish interest in him, than the superior gentleman who was coldly winning out his gratitude. He thought he understood now the reason of his strange and varying moods, even his bitter, superstitious warning in regard to the probable curse entailed upon himself for saving a drowning man. Of this he thought little; enough that he fancied that Capt. Jack's concern in his illness was heightened by that fear, and this assurance of his protecting friendship thrilled him with pleasure. There was no reason now why he should not at once go back to his farm, where at least, Capt. Jack would always find him, and he did so, returning on the same boat. He was now fully recovered from his illness and calmer in mind; he redoubled his labors to put himself in a position to help the mysterious fugitive when the time should come. The remote farm should always be a haven of refuge for him, and in this hope he forbore to take any outside help, remaining solitary and alone, that Capt. Jack's retreat should be inviolate. And so the long dry season passed, the hay was gathered, the pasturing herds sent home, and the first rains' dimpling like shot, the broadening surface of the river were all that broke his unending solitude. In this enforced attitude of waiting and expectancy he was exalted and strengthened by a new idea. He was not a religious man, but dimly remembering the exhortations of some camp meeting of his boyhood, he conceived the idea that he might have been selected to work out the regeneration of Capt. Jack. What might not come of this meeting and communing together in this lovely spot! That anything was due to the injured representatives of the murdered Sheriff, whose bones were rotting in the trench, he daily but unconcernedly passed, did not occur to him. Perhaps his mind was not large enough for the double consideration. Friendship and love—and, for the matter of that, religion—are eminently one-ideaed.

But one night he awakened with a start. His hand, which was hanging out of his bunk, was dabbling idly in water! He had barely time to spring to his middle in what seemed to be a slowly filling tank before the door fell in as from an inward presence, and his whole shanty collapsed like a pack of cards. But it fell outward; the roof sliding from over his head like a withdrawn canopy, and he was swept from his feet against it, and thence out into what might have been another world. For the rain had ceased and the full moon revealed only one vast illimitable expanse of water. It was not an overflow, but the whole rushing river magnified and repeated a million times, which even as he gasped for breath and clung to the roof, was bearing him away he knew not whither. But it was bearing him away upon its centre, for as he cast one swift glance toward his meadows he saw they were covered by the same sweeping torrent, dotted with his sailing hayricks and reaching to the wooded foothills. It was the great flood of '54—in its awe-inspiring completeness it might have seemed to him the primeval deluge.

As his frail craft swept under a cottonwood, he caught at one of the overhanging limbs and working his way desperately along the bough, at last reached a secure position in the fork of the tree. Here he was for the moment safe. But the devastation viewed from this height was only the more appalling. Every sign of his clearing—all evidence of his past year's industry had disappeared. He was now conscious for the first time of the lowing of the few cattle he had kept, as huddled together on a slight eminence they one by one slipped over, struggling, into the flood. The shining bodies of his dead horses rolled by him as he gazed. The lower-lying limbs of the sycamore near him were bending with the burden of the lighter articles from his overturned wagon and cabin which they had caught and retained, and a rake was securely lodged in a bough. The habitual solitude of this locality was now strangely invaded by drifting sheds, agricultural implements, and fence rails from unknown and remote neighbors, and he could faintly hear the far-calling of some unhappy farmer adrift upon a spar of his wrecked and shattered house. When day broke he was cold and hungry. Hours passed in hopeless monotony, with no slackening or diminution of the waters. Even the drifts became less, and a vacant sea at last spread before him on which nothing moved. An awful silence impressed him. In the afternoon rain again began to fall on this gray, nebulous expanse, until the whole world seemed made of aqueous vapor. He had but one idea now—the coming of the evening boat, and he would reserve his strength to swim to it. He did not know until later that it could no longer follow the old channel of the river and passed far beyond his sight and hearing. With his disappointment and exposure that night came a return of his old fever. His limbs were alternately racked with pain or benumbed and lifeless. He could scarcely retain his position. At times he scarcely cared to—and speculated upon ending his suffering by a quick plunge downward. In other moments of lucid misery he was conscious of having wandered in his mind, of having seen the dead face of the murdered Sheriff, washed out of the shallow grave by the floor, staring at him from the water. To this was added the hallucination of noises. He heard voices, his own name called by a voice he knew—Capt. Jack's.

Suddenly he started but in that fatal moment lost his balance and plunged downward. But before the water closed above his head he had had a cruel glimpse of help near him; of a flashing light—of the black hull of a tug not many yards away—of moving figures—the sensation of a sudden plunge following his own, the grip of a strong hand upon his collar and—unconsciousness! When he came to he was being lifted in a boat from the tug and rowed through the deserted streets of a large city until he was taken in through the second story window of a half submerged hotel and cared for. But all his questioning yielded only the information that this tug—a privately procured one—not belonging to the Public Relief Association—had been despatched for him with special directions, by a man who acted as one of the crew, and who was the one who had plunged in for him at the last moment. The man had left the boat at Stockton. There was nothing more? Yes!—He had left a letter. Morse seized it feverishly. It was a few lines:

"We are quits now. You are all right. I have saved you from drowning and shifted the wire to my own shoulders. Good-by. Capt. Jack."

The astounded man attempted to rise—to utter an explanation, but fell unconscious.

Weeks passed before he was able to leave his bed, and then only as an impoverished and physically shattered man. He had no means to restock the farm left bare by the subsiding water. A kindly train packer offered him a situation as muleteer in a pack train going to the mountains—for he knew tracks and passes and could ride. The mountains gave him back a little of the vigor he had lost in the river valley, but none of its dreams and ambitions. One day while tracking a lost mule he stopped to slake his thirst in a water hole, all that the summer had left of a lonely mountain torrent. Enlarging the hole to give drink to his beast also, he was obliged to dislodge and throw out with the red soil some bits of honey comb rock which were so queer looking and so heavy as to attract his attention. Two of the largest he took back to camp with him. They were gold. From the locality he took out a fortune. Nobody wondered. To the Californian's superstition it was perfectly natural. It was "nigger luck"—the luck of the ignorant, the inexperienced, the non-seeker—the irony of the gods!

But the simple bucolic nature that had sustained itself against temptation with patient industry and lonely self-concentration succumbed to rapidly acquired wealth. So it chanced that one day with a crowd of excitement-loving spendthrifts and companions he found himself on the outskirts of a lawless mountain town. An eager, frantic crowd had already assembled there; a desperado was to be lynched. Pushing his way through the crowd for a nearer view of the exciting spectacle the changed and reckless Morse was stopped by armed men only at the foot of a cart, which upheld a quiet, determined man, who, with a rope around his neck, was scornfully surveying the mob who held the other end of the rope drawn across the limb of a tree above him. The eyes of the doomed man caught those of Morse—his expression changed—a kindly smile lit his face—he bowed his proud head for the first time, with an easy gesture of farewell.

And then, with a shriek, Morse threw himself upon the nearest armed guard and a fierce struggle began. He had overpowered his adversary and seized another in his hopeless fight toward the cart, when the half astonished crowd felt that something must be done. It was done, with a sharp report, the upward curl of smoke, and the holding back of the guard as Morse staggered forward free—with a bullet in his heart. Yet even then he did not fall until he reached the cart, when he lapsed forward dead, with his arms outstretched and his head upon the doomed man's feet.

There was something so supreme and all powerful in this hopeless act of devotion that the heart of the multitude thrilled and then recoiled aghast at its work, and a single word or a gesture from the doomed man himself might have set him free. But they say—and it is credibly recorded—that as Capt. Jack Despard looked down upon the hopeless sacrifice at his feet, his eyes blazed, and he flung upon the crowd a curse so awful and sweeping that, hardened as they were, their blood ran cold, or else leaped furiously to their cheeks. "And now," he said cooly, tightening the rope around his neck with a jerk of his head, "go on and be d——d to you! I'm ready."

They did not hesitate this time. And Martin Morse and Capt. Jack Despard were buried in the same grave.

The Mistress of the Mine;

OR,

A WOMAN INTERVENES.

By ROBERT BARR,

Author of "The Face and the Mask," "In the Midst of Alarms," &c.

CHAPTER XXI.

When George Wentworth received this message he read it several times over before its full meaning dawned upon him. Then he paced up and down his room and gave way to his feelings. His best friends, who had been privileged to hear George's vocabulary when he was rather angry, admitted that the young man had a fluency of expression which was very much more terse than proper. When the real significance of the despatch became apparent to him, George outdid himself in this particular line. Then he realized that, however consolatory such language is to a very angry man, it does little good in any practical way. He paced silently up and down the room, wondering what he could do, and the more he wondered the less light he saw through the fog. He put on his hat and went into the other room.

"Henry," he said to his partner, "do you know anybody who would lend me £20,000?"

Henry laughed. The idea of anybody lending that sum of money except on the very best security was in itself extremely comic.

"Do you want it to-day?" he said.

"Yes, I want it to-day."

"Well, I don't know any better plan than to go out into the street and ask every man if he has that sum about him. You are certain to meet men who have very much more than £20,000, and perhaps one of them, struck by your very sane appearance at the moment, might hand over the sum to you. I think, however, George, that you would be more successful if you met the capitalist in a secluded lane some dark night, and had a good reliable club in your hand."

"You are right," said George. "Of course, there is just as much possibility of my reaching the moon as getting that sum of money on short notice."

"Yes, or on long notice either, I imagine. I know plenty of men who have the money, but I wouldn't undertake to ask them for it, and I don't believe you would. Still, there is nothing like trying. He who tries may succeed, but no one can succeed who doesn't try. Why not go to old Longworth? He could let you have the money in a moment if he wanted to do so. He knows you. What's your security, what are you going to do with it—that eternal Mine of yours?"

"Yes, that 'eternal Mine.' I want it to be mine. That is why I need the £20,000."

"Well, George, I don't see much hope for you. You never spoke to old Longworth about it, did you? He wasn't one of the men you intended to get into this company?"

"No, he was not. I wish he had been. He would have treated us better than his rascally nephew has done."

"Ah, that immaculate young man has been playing you tricks, has he?"

"He has played me one trick, which is enough."

"Well, why don't you go and see the old man and lay the case before him? He treats that nephew as if he were his son. Now, a man will do a great deal for his son, and perhaps old *Longworth* might do something for his nephew."

"Yes, but I should have to explain to him that his nephew is a scoundrel."

"Very well, that is just the kind of explanation to bring the £20,000. If his nephew really is a scoundrel, and you can prove it, you could not want a better level than that on the old man's money bags."

"By Jove," said Wentworth, "I believe I shall try it. I want to let him know, anyhow, what sort of man his nephew is. I'll go and see him."

"I would," said the other, turning to his work. And so George Wentworth, putting the cablegram in his pocket, went to see old Mr. Longworth in a frame of mind in which no man should see his fellow man. He did not wait to be announced, but walked, to the astonishment of the clerk, straight through into Mr. Longworth's room. He found the old man seated at his desk.

"Good day, Mr. Wentworth," said the financier cordially.

"Good day," replied George curtly. "I have come to read a cable despatch to you, or to let you read it." He threw the despatch down before the old gentleman, who adjusted his spectacles and read it. Then he looked up enquiringly at Wentworth.

"You don't understand it, do you?" said the latter.

"I confess I do not. The Longworth in this telegram does not refer to me, does it?"

"No, it does not refer to you, but it refers to one of your house. Your nephew, William Longworth, is a scoundrel!"

"Ah," said the old man, placing the despatch on the desk again and removing his glasses. "Have you come to tell me that?"

"Yes, I have. Did you know it before?"

"No, I did not," answered the old gentleman, his color rising, "and I do not know it now. I know you say so, and I think very likely you will be glad to take back what you have said. I will at least give you the opportunity."

"So far from taking it back, Mr. Longworth, I shall prove it. Your nephew formed a partnership with my friend Kenyon and myself to float on the London market a certain Canadian mine."

"My dear sir," broke in the old gentleman, "I have no desire to hear of my nephew's private speculations. I have nothing to do with them. I have nothing to do with your mine. The matter is of no interest whatever to me, and I must decline to hear anything about it. You are, also, if you will excuse my saying so, not in a fit state of temper to talk to any gentleman. If you like to come back here when you are calmer, I shall be very pleased to listen to what you have to say."

"I shall never be calmer on this subject. I have told you that your nephew is a scoundrel. You are pleased to deny the accusation."

"I do not deny it; I merely said I did not know it was the case, and I do not believe it, that is all."

"Very well, the moment I begin to show you proof that things are as I say——"

"My dear sir," cried the elder man, with some heat, "you are not showing proof. You are merely making assertions, and assertions about a man who is absent—who is not here to defend himself. If you have anything to say against William Longworth, come and say it when he is here, and he shall answer for himself. It is cowardly of you, and ungenerous to me, to make a number of accusations which I am in no wise able to refute."

"Will you listen to what I have to say?"

"No; I will not."

"Then, by God, you shall!" and with that Wentworth strode to the door and turned the key, while the old man rose from his seat and faced him.

"Do you mean to threaten me, sir, in my own office?"

"I mean to say, Mr. Longworth, that I have made a statement which I am going to prove to you. I mean that you shall listen to me, and listen to me *now*."

"And I say, if you have anything to charge against my nephew, come and say it when he is here."

"When he is here, Mr. Longworth, it will be too late to say it; at present you can repair the injury he has done. When he returns to England you cannot do so, no matter how much you might wish to make the attempt."

The old man stood irresolute for a moment, then he sat down in his chair again.

"Very well," he said, with a sigh. "I am not so combative as I once was. Go on with your story."

"My story is very short," said Wentworth. "It simply amounts to this. You know your nephew formed a partnership with us in relation to the Canadian mine?"

"I know nothing about it, I tell you," answered Mr. Longworth.

"Very well, you know it now."

"I know you say so."

"Do you doubt my word?"

"I will tell you more about that when I hear what you have to say. Go on."

"Well, your nephew, pretending to aid us in forming this company, did everything to retard our progress. He engaged offices that took a long time to fit up, and which we had, at last, to take in hand ourselves. Then he left for a week, leaving us no address, and refusing to answer the letters I sent to his office for him. On one pretext or another the forming of the company was delayed, until, at length, when the option by which Mr. Kenyon held the mine had only a month to run, your nephew went to America in company with Mr. Melville, ostensibly to see and report upon the property. After waiting a certain length of time and hearing nothing from him (he had promised to cable us), Kenyon went to America to get a renewal of the option. This cablegram explains his success. He finds, on going there, that your nephew has secured the option of the mine *in his own name*, and, as Kenyon says, we are cheated. Now, have you any doubt whether your nephew is a scoundrel or not?"

Mr. Longworth mused for a few moments on what the young man had told him.

"If what you say is exactly true, there is no doubt William has been guilty of a piece of very sharp practice."

"Sharp practice!" cried the other, "you might as well call robbery sharp practice!"

"My dear sir, I have listened to you; now I ask you to listen to me. If, as I say, what you have stated is true, my nephew has done something which I think an honorable man would not do; but as to that I cannot judge until I hear his side of the story. It may put a different complexion on the matter, and I have no doubt it will; but even granting your version is true in every particular, what have I to do with it? I am not responsible for my nephew's actions. He has entered into a business connection, it seems, with two young men, and has outwitted them. That is probably what the world would say about it. Perhaps, as you say, he has been guilty of something worse, and has cheated his partners. But even admitting everything to be true, I do not see how I am responsible in any way."

"Legally you are not; morally, I think, you are."

"Why?"

"If he were your son——"

"But he is not my son, he is my nephew."

"If your son had committed a theft, would you not do everything in your power to counteract the evil he had done?"

"I might, and I might not. Some fathers pay their son's debts, others do not. I cannot say what action I should take in a purely suppostitious case."

"Very well, all I have to say is, our option runs out in two or three days. Twenty thousand pounds will secure the mine for us. I want that £20,000 before the option ceases."

"And do you expect me to pay you £20,000 for this?"

"Yes, I do."

Old Mr. Longworth leaned back in his office chair and looked at the young man in amazement.

"To think that you, a man of the city, would come to me, another man of the city, with such an absurd idea in your head, is simply grotesque."

"Then the name of the Longworths is nothing to you—the good name, I mean?"

"The good name of the Longworths, my dear sir, is everything to me; but I think it will be able to take care of itself without any assistance from you."

There was silence for a few moments. Then Wentworth said in a voice of suppressed anguish, "I thought, Mr. Longworth, one of your family was a scoundrel. I now wish to say I believe the epithet covers uncle as well as nephew. You have had a chance to repair the mischief one of your family has done. You have answered me with contempt. You have not shown me the slightest indication of wishing to make amends."

He unlocked the door.

"Come, now," said old Mr. Longworth, rising, "that will do, that will do, Mr. Wentworth." Then he pressed an electric bell, and when the clerk appeared, he said: "Show this young gentleman the door, please, and if he ever calls here again, do not admit him."

And so Wentworth, clenching his hands with rage, was shown to the door. He had the rest of the day to ponder on the fact that angry man seldom accomplishes his purpose.

CHAPTER XXII.

The stormy interview with Wentworth disturbed the usual serenity of Mr. Longworth's temper. He went home earlier than was customary with him that night, and the more he thought over the attack, the more unjustifiable it seemed. He wondered what his nephew had been at, and tried to remember what Wentworth had charged against him. He could not recollect, the angrier portions of the interview having, as it were, blotted the charges from his mind. There remained, however, a very bitter resentment against Wentworth. Mr. Longworth searched his conscience to see if he could be in the least to blame, but he found nothing in the recollection of his dealings with the young men to justify him in feeling at all responsible for the disaster that had overtaken them. He read his favorite evening paper with less than his usual interest, for every now and then the episode in his office would crop up in his mind. Finally he said sharply:

"Edith?"

"Yes, father," answered his daughter.

"You remember a person named Wentworth whom you had here the evening William went away?"

"Yes, father."

"Very well. Never invite him to this house again."

"What has he been doing?" asked the young woman in a rather tremulous voice.

"I desire you also never to ask any one connected with him, that man Kenyon, for instance," continued her father, ignoring her question.

"I thought," she answered, "that Mr. Kenyon was not in this country at present."

"He is not, but he will be back again, I suppose. At any rate, I wish to have nothing more to do with those people. You understand that?"

"Yes, father."

Mr. Longworth went on with his reading. Edith saw that her father was greatly disturbed, and she much desired to know what the reason was, but knew enough of human nature to believe that, in a very short time, he would relieve her anxiety. He again appeared to be trying to fix his attention on the paper. Then he threw it down and turned toward her.

"That man Wentworth," he said bitterly, "behaved to-day in a most unjustifiable manner to me. It seems that William and he and Kenyon embarked in some mine project. I knew nothing of their doings, and was not even consulted with regard to them. Now it appears William has gone to America and done something Wentworth considers wrong. Wentworth came to me and demanded £20,000—the most preposterous thing ever heard of—said I owed it to clear the good name of Longworth, as if the good name were dependent on him, or any one like him. I turned him out of the office."

Edith did not answer for a few moments, while her father gave expression to his indignation by various ejaculations that need not be here recorded.

"Did he say," she spoke at length, "in what way William had done wrong?"

"I do not remember now just what he said. I know I told him to come again when my nephew was present, and then make his charges against him, if he wanted to do so. Not that I admitted I had anything to do with the matter at all, but I simply refused to listen to charges against an absent man. I paid no attention to them."

"That certainly was reasonable," replied Edith. "What did he say to it?"

"Oh, he abused me, and abused William, and went on at a dreadful rate, until I was obliged to order him out of the office."

"But what did he say about meeting William at your office and making the charges against him then?"

"What did he say? I don't remember. Oh, yes, he said it would be too late then; that they had only a few days to do what business they have to do, and that is why he made the demand for £20,000. It was to repair the harm, whatever the harm was, William had done. I look on it simply as some blackmailing scheme of his, and I am astonished that a man belonging to as good a house as he does should try that game with me. I shall speak to the elder partner about it to-morrow, and if he does not make the young man apologize in the most abject manner, he will be the loser by it, I can tell him that."

"I would think no more about it, father, if I were you. Do not let it trouble you."

"Oh, it doesn't trouble me; but young men nowadays seem to think they can say anything to their elders."

"I mean," she continued, "that I would not go to his partner for a day or two. Wait and see what happens. I have no doubt when he thinks over the matter, he will be thoroughly ashamed of himself."

"Well, I hope so!"

"Then give him the chance of being ashamed of himself, and take no steps in the matter."

Edith, very shortly afterward, went to her own room, and there, clasping her hands behind her, she walked up and down thinking, with a very troubled heart, on what she had heard. Her view of the matter was very different from that of her father. She felt certain something wrong had been done by her cousin. For a long time she had distrusted his supposed friendship for the two young men, and now she pictured to herself John Kenyon in the wilds of Canada, helpless and despondent because of the great wrong that had been done him. It was far into the night when she retired, and it was early next morning when she arose. Her father was bright and cheerful at breakfast, and had evidently forgotten all about the unpleasant incident of the day before. A good night's sleep had erased it from his memory. Edith was glad of this, she did not mention the subject. After he had gone to the city the young woman prepared to follow him. She did not take her carriage, but hailed a hansom and gave the driver the number of Wentworth's offices. That young man was evidently somewhat surprised to see her. He had been trying to write to Kenyon some account of his interview with old Mr. Longworth, and, somehow, after he had finished, he thought John Kenyon would not at all approve of his zeal, so had just torn the letter up.

"Take this chair," he said, wheeling an armchair into position. "It is the only comfortable one we have in the room."

"Comfort does not matter," said Miss Longworth. "I came to see you about the mica mine. What has my cousin done?"

"How do you know he has done anything?"

"That does not matter; I know. Tell me as quickly as you can what he has done."

"It is not a pleasant story to tell," he said, "to a young lady about one of her relatives."

"Never mind that. Tell me."

"Very well, he has done this. He has pretended he was our friend and pretended he was going to aid us in forming this company. He has delayed us by every means in his power until the option has nearly expired. Then he has gone to Canada and secured for himself, and a man named Melville, the option of the mine when John Kenyon's time is up. That is to say, at 12 o'clock to-morrow, when Kenyon's option expires, your cousin will pay the money and will own the mine; after which, of course, Kenyon and myself will be out of it. I don't mind the loss at all. I would gladly give Kenyon my share; but for John it is a terrible blow. He had counted on the money to pay debts of honor which he owes to his father for his education. He calls them debts of honor; they are not debts of honor in the ordinary sense of the word. Therefore it seemed to me a terrible thing that that——" here he paused and did not go on. He saw there were tears in the eyes of the girl to whom he was talking.

"It is brutal," he said, "to tell you all this. You are not to blame for it, and neither is your father, although I spoke to him in a heated manner yesterday."

"When did you say the option expires?"

"At 12 o'clock to-morrow."

"How much is required to buy the mine?"

"Twenty thousand pounds."

"Can money be sent to Canada by cable?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Aren't you quite sure?"

"No, I am not. It can be sent by telegraph in this country and in America."

"How long will it take you to find out?"

"Only a few moments."

"Very well; where is Mr. Kenyon now?"

"Kenyon is in Ottawa. I had a cablegram from him yesterday."

"Then will you write a cablegram that can be sent away at once asking him to wait at the telegraph office until he gets a further message from you?"

"Yes, I can; but what good will it do?"

"Never mind what good it will do; perhaps it will do no good. I am going to try to make it of some good. Meanwhile, remember, if I succeed, John Kenyon must never know the particulars of this transaction."

"He never shall, if you say so."

"I say so. Now it is six hours earlier here than it is in Canada, is it not?"

"About that length of time, I think."

"Very well, lose no time in getting the cable message sent to him, and tell him to answer, so that we shall be sure he is at the other end of the wire. Then find out about the cabling of the money. I shall be back here, I think, about the same time you are."

With that she left the office, and, getting into her cab, was driven to her father's office.

"Well, my girl," said the old man, shoving his spectacles up on his brow and gazing at her, "what is it now, some new extravagance?"

"Yes, father, some new extravagance." His daughter was evidently excited, and her breath came quickly. She closed the door and took a chair opposite her father.

"Father," she said, "I have been your business man, as you call me now, for a long time."

"Yes, you have. Are you going to strike for an increase in salary?"

"Father," she said earnestly, not heeding the jocularity of his tone, "this is very serious. I want you to give me some money for myself—to speculate with."

"I will do that very gladly. How much do you want?" The old man turned his chair round and pulled out his check book.

"I want £30,000," she answered.

Mr. Longworth wheeled quickly round on her and looked at her in astonishment. "Thirty thousand what?"

"Thirty thousand pounds, father, and I want it now, and I want it in cash."

"My dear girl," he expostulated, "have you any idea how much £30,000 is? Do you know that £30,000 is a fortune?"

"Yes, I know that."

"Do you know that there is not one in twenty of the richest merchants who could, at a moment's notice, produce £30,000 in ready money?"

"Yes, I suppose that is true. Have you not the ready money?"

"Yes, I have the money. I can draw a check for that amount, and it will be honored at once; but I cannot give you so much money without knowing what you are going to do with it."

"And suppose, father, you do not approve of what I am going to do with it?"

"All the more reason, my dear, that I should know."

"Then, father, I suppose you mean that whatever services I have rendered you—whatever comfort I have given you—what I have been to you is not worth £30,000."

"You shouldn't talk like that, daughter. Everything I have is yours, or will be when I die. It is for you I work. It is for you I accumulate money. You will have everything I own the moment I lay down my work."

"Father," cried the young girl, standing up before him, "I do not want your money when you die. I do not want you to die, as you very well know; but I do want £30,000 to-day, and now. I want it more than I ever wanted anything else before in my life, or ever shall again. Will you give it to me?"

"No, I will not; unless you tell me what you are going to do with it."

"Then, father, you can leave your money to your nephew when you die. I shall never touch a penny of it. I now bid you good-by. I will go out from this and earn my living."

With that the young woman turned to go, but her father, with a sprightliness one would not have expected from his years, sprang to the door and looked at her with alarm.

"Edith, my child, you never talked to me like this before in your life. What is wrong with you?"

"Nothing, father, except that I want a check for £30,000, and want it now."

"And do you mean to say that you will leave me if I do not give it to you?"

"Have you ever broken your word, father?"

"Never, my child, that I know of."

"Then remember I am your daughter. I have said if I do not get that money now I shall never enter our house again."

"But £30,000 is a tremendous amount. Remember I have given my word, too, that I would not give you the money unless you told me what it was for."

"Very well, father, I will tell you what it is for when you ask me. I would advise you, though, not to ask me, and I would advise you to give me the money. It will all be returned to you if you want it."

"Oh, I don't care about the money at all, Edith. I merely, of course, don't want to see it wasted."

"And have you no trust in my judgment?"

"Well, you know I haven't much faith in any woman's judgment in the matter of investing money."

"Trust me this time, father, I shall never ask you for any more."

The old man went slowly to his desk, wrote out a check, and handed it to his daughter. It was for £30,000.

(To be continued.)